

Current Economic Programs Printed Survey Results: by the *New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas* Statistics Users Respondent Base

U.S. Census Bureau
Current Economic Statistics User Survey

OMB CQM-26 (Rev.5/5/98)

I. DATA CONTENT

Your answers identifying the survey data you use will help us understand our users' patterns of data use.

1. Which Current Economic Statistics from the Census Bureau do you use? (Mark all that apply.)

(1) Monthly

0.6%;	1	None
47.8%;	76	Retail Sales
28.9%;	46	Wholesale Trade
35.2%;	56	Manufacturing/Trade Inventory/Sales
86.2%;	137	Housing Starts
87.4%;	139	Building Permits
73.0%;	116	New Home Sales
63.5%;	101	Value of New Construction Put in Place
62.9%;	100	Housing Completions
48.4%;	77	Expenditures for Residential Improvements
67.3%;	107	New Residential Construction
35.2%;	56	New Mobile Home Placements
28.3%;	45	Monthly Imports and Exports
36.5%;	58	Current Industrial Reports
35.2%;	56	Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, Orders

Replies 159; Forms 166

(2) Quarterly

46.9%;	30	Quarterly Financial Report
81.2%;	52	Current Industrial Reports
7.8%;	5	Federal Assistance Awards Data System
21.9%;	14	Quarterly Tax Survey
10.9%;	7	Quarterly Public Employee Retirement

Replies 64; Forms 166

(3) Annual

50.6%;	84	Annual Retail Trade
39.2%;	65	Annual (Wholesale) Trade
20.5%;	34	Annual Survey of Communications
26.5%;	44	Transportation Annual Survey
24.7%;	41	Service Annual Survey
60.8%;	101	County Business Patterns

35.5%;	59	ZIP Code Business Patterns
37.3%;	62	Statistics of U.S. Businesses
59.6%;	99	Characteristics of New Housing
84.9%;	141	Annual Building Permits
100.0%;	166	New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas
26.5%;	44	Annual Capital Expenditures
49.4%;	82	Annual Survey of Manufactures
38.6%;	64	Current Industrial Reports
15.1%;	25	Research and Development Survey
23.5%;	39	Plant Capacity Utilization
10.8%;	18	Education Finance Survey
16.9%;	28	State Tax Collection Survey
6.6%;	11	Annual Public Employee Retirement
12.7%;	21	Annual Survey of Public Employment
19.3%;	32	Consolidated Federal Funds Report
22.9%;	38	State Government Finances
34.9%;	58	Annual Imports and Exports

Replies 166; Forms 166

II. DATA DELIVERY

The Census Bureau is considering use of the Internet as the primary method of data delivery. By completing the following questions, you will help us retain the most essential delivery formats and design the best possible data delivery service.

(4) 2. How do you receive current economic data now? (Mark all that apply.)

88.5%;	146	Printed Publications	13.3%;	22	FAX
73.3%;	121	World Wide Web (Internet)	10.3%;	17	Direct (E-mail) delivery
39.4%;	65	CD-ROMs	3.0%;	5	Regular mail
28.5%;	47	Diskettes	5.5%;	9	Other

Replies 165; Forms 166

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- visit to Census release library and requests to commerce library.
 - tape (CPB)
 - Check values by telephone
 - also use microfiche in some cases.
 - time-share vendor (private)
 - hard copy computer run
 - Individual sources using census bureau data
 - CD Rom & Publications in Library
 - Second hand through trade journals
 - building permits printout
-

(5) 3. What format do you PREFER when downloading data for further manipulation? (Mark all that apply.)

72.0%;	113	Spreadsheet (e.g., wkl, xls, etc...)
40.8%;	64	Database (e.g., dbf, mdb, etc...)
30.6%;	48	ASCII delimited
19.1%;	30	ASCII flat files
14.0%;	22	Retrieve from print or screen and enter manually
8.9%;	14	Do not manipulate data
2.5%;	4	Other

Replies 157; Forms 166

- TSO files
- Text files: txt. or PRN
- Also as text or word file
- SAS data sets

4. What capabilities do you want on the Census Internet site? (For each line, indicate the degree of your preferences, from 5 [high] to 1 [low].)

(6) a. Direct (E-mail) delivery:

36.2%;	55	5	23.0%;	35	3	9.9%;	15	1
15.8%;	24	4	8.6%;	13	2	6.6%;	10	Don't know

Replies 152; Forms 166

(7) b. E-mail notification:

43.6%;	65	5	16.8%;	25	3	10.1%;	15	1
15.4%;	23	4	10.1%;	15	2	4.0%;	6	Don't know

Replies 149; Forms 166

(8) c. Retrieve/display to screen:

55.7%;	83	5	11.4%;	17	3	8.1%;	12	1
17.4%;	26	4	2.0%;	3	2	5.4%;	8	Don't know

Replies 149; Forms 166

(9) d. Search:

70.9%;	112	5	7.6%;	12	3	1.3%;	2	1
15.8%;	25	4	1.3%;	2	2	3.2%;	5	Don't know

Replies 158; Forms 166

(10) e. Download complete data sets:

71.2%;	109	5	5.9%;	9	3	1.3%;	2	1
17.0%;	26	4	2.0%;	3	2	2.6%;	4	Don't know

Replies 153; Forms 166

(11) f. Download selected data:

74.8%;	119	5	3.1%;	5	3	0.6%;	1	1
15.7%;	25	4	3.8%;	6	2	1.9%;	3	Don't know

Replies 159; Forms 166

(12) g. Software help/tutorials:

17.2%;	25	5	33.8%;	49	3	12.4%;	18	1
14.5%;	21	4	18.6%;	27	2	3.4%;	5	Don't know

Replies 145; Forms 166

(13) h. Publication-quality printing:

29.9%;	46	5	15.6%;	24	3	13.0%;	20	1
25.3%;	39	4	13.6%;	21	2	2.6%;	4	Don't know

Replies 154; Forms 166

(14) i. Charts and graphs:

32.3%;	50	5	20.6%;	32	3	8.4%;	13	1
18.7%;	29	4	18.7%;	29	2	1.3%;	2	Don't know

Replies 155; Forms 166

(15) j. Geographic maps:

30.7%;	46	5	15.3%;	23	3	6.7%;	10	1
31.3%;	47	4	14.0%;	21	2	2.0%;	3	Don't know

Replies 150; Forms 166

(16) k. Other, please specify:

75.0%;	9	electronic bulletin board	25.0%;	3	Other
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Replies 12; Forms 166

- Dowlad selected data set according to state, regions, & metro areas
 - ACROBAT FILES, which you may include in item h.
 - As many items in pdf format as possible = 5
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(17) l. Electronic Bulletin Board (To collect write-ins)

50.0%;	1	5	0.0%;	0	3	0.0%;	0	1
0.0%;	0	4	50.0%;	1	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

Replies 2; Forms 166

III. DATA USAGE

Your answers describing how you use the data will help us design the most effective Current Economic Statistics retrieval tool.

(18) 5. Do you combine/compare/merge data from more than one source listed in Question 1?

19.6%;	32	No	80.4%;	131	Yes
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Replies 163; Forms 166

(19) 6. What time periods do you consider when using these data? (Mark X all that apply.)

66.0%;	107	5+ years	47.5%;	77	trends up to 1 year
65.4%;	106	trends up to 5 years	0.0%;	0	Other
53.7%;	87	latest 1 or 2 periods			

Replies 162; Forms 166

(20) 7. How do you use the data? (Mark all that apply.)

49.7%;	80	Create value-added products/services
39.1%;	63	Perform patron/client inquiries
31.7%;	51	Inform marketing decisions
24.2%;	39	Republish in newspaper/journal
23.0%;	37	Inform investment decisions
19.9%;	32	Store reports/printouts for archival purposes
9.9%;	16	Locate new sites
0.0%;	0	Other

Replies 161; Forms 166

- [none]
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(21) 8. What explanatory information do you consult when using these data? (Mark all that apply.)

73.6%;	117	Definition of terms
61.6%;	98	Sampling and estimation methodology
56.0%;	89	Narrative text describing survey results
44.7%;	71	Survey design
10.7%;	17	None
0.6%;	1	Other

Replies 159; Forms 166

- Comparisons to earlier surveys and/or similar data from other agencies--e.g. census to BEA in one estimates.
-

(22) 9. Do you have any pressing data or information needs that are not currently being met?

- Regional retail sales estimates (cancelled after 1996)
- More local info. (PMSA at least)
- Non-residential building permit data.
- Yes--Need more timely and more defined (i.e. 4-digit SIC code) SUB-NATIONAL data.
- Retail Trade Monthly - Regional Data Survey - Blue Pages, Building Permits - Non-Resident & Additions.
- Apartment (Multi-Family) Statistics.
- Information on nonresidential construction.
- Data is often no longer available at county or regional level, which is a big loss to local government. If possible, please reinstate (eg. retail sales). Also, no-residential building permits no longer available.
- Info at small geographic levels, villages, small cities, townships
- Nonresidential Construction Dollars by STATE Highway Expenditures by STATE data has to be timely.
- MCD Business Patterns, Massachusetts is doing away with county government, MCD income estimates.
- The availability of Residential and Commercial Building Permit Data.
- Accurate and timely international statistics on the air conditioning, refrigeration and heating industry.

- I'd love to see employment data by SIC based on place of residence. Also wish for reconciliation between RIMS, SIC, & NAICS.
- 1) Monthly building permits by stats. 2) Retail sales by states & MSA's.
- No.
- We really just want to get the monthly statistics listed in Question #1 timely-- the day they are released/announced to other new agencies.
- Better capital expenditure data and Better motor vehicle data.
- Non-residential building permits data and value of new non-residential construction part in place.
- Statistics on new residential construction for MSA's in more locations (e.g. all top MSA's)
- 1) NAICS to harmonized code concordance. 2) Timely plant capacity utilization at greatest detail level possible. 3) Windows version import data/monthly annual easy to use historical with full detail. 4) New Home sales (without land).
- Yes--Commercial building permits--Bring them back now!!!
- Resume geographic estimates of retail sales.
- YES! Bring back non-residential state/local permits authorized! This was a severe loss for interpreting local economic trends. Also, more geographic detail, more frequently.
- Wish you were more current...
- Would like to have detailed Building permit data on line. Would really like to know which census tracts correspond to zip codes (and counties).
- Commercial Construction Permit Activity
- Monthly Retail Sales for U.S. Metropolitan Areas.
- current retail sales
- 1). Employment in types of projects, such as residential construction. 2). Construction productivity measures.
- Two pieces of information that the Census Department had done in the past--metropolitan estimates of retail trade and metro commercial construction permit activity--both annual.
- Relatively current statistics at the county and sub-county geographic levels.
- Better categorization of Import/Export information. It is very difficult to determine how much of some of our products were imported or exported.
- Non-residential construction that was deleted from current const. series.
- Non-residential Building permits.
- Housing stats and completions by state, MSA Value of construction put-in-place by stats, MSA
- Need more detailed annual data for 6 digit SIC codes
- Place and regional economic data sets in relation to population/race trends.
- Expenditures for non-residential construction, especially non-residential reconstruction.
- Utilization of data for merging with Atlas GIS. Convert landview to include information down to Block level.
- Monthly housing inventory by metro area.
- Average expenditures per residential improvement project for single family homes by region. Average value for residential permits by region.
- Website is extremely difficult to navigate.
- Rent data and vacancy rates.
- Quarterly data, analyzed growth rates for all statistics. Currently, only some of the data is shown as a quarterly growth rate analyzed.
- MSA retail sales
- Permits for remodeling and non-residential construction.
- Non-residential construction data outside California! Bring it back!
- Data at the metropolitan area level, e.g. retail sales, commercial building permits (office, industrial, retail).
- We have a need for long historical time series and for long-term forecasts.
- Bring back retail sales at metropolitan area level.
- sub-national retail trade
- Building permits for non-residents.
- Non-residential building permit data collection should be restored by state and metro area!
- Commercial building permits, Commercial real estates sales.
- Estimates of coverage by county for building permits better state and local data.
- Report on production of industrial fabrics

- Just wish more data were available at county or metro level in a timely fashion
- Yes-I need non-residential construction series (commercial, industrial, etc.) on a geographic basis-as used to be done!
- Future of employment w/regards to manufacturing & agriculture. (i.e. what percentage of economy will these represent.) Also, resource availability trends.
- Very disappointed that non-residential building permit data is no longer being tracked--our models rely on this!

IV. INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION ISSUES

We will soon begin restructuring the Current Economic Surveys based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Your answers will help us ensure that these surveys continue to provide the economic information needed by markets, policy makers, and business people. For more information on NAICS, see the Bureau's web site: <http://www.census.gov/NAICS>.

(24) 10. At what levels of detail do you MOST FREQUENTLY USE industry data classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)? (Mark all that apply.)

56.2%;	86	4-digit industries (or maximum detail I can get)
41.2%;	63	Sector totals (SIC division); e.g., Manufacturing or Retail Trade
39.9%;	61	2-digit major groups
33.3%;	51	3-digit industry groups
11.8%;	18	NA (don't use SIC-based data)
2.6%;	4	Other

Replies 153; Forms 166

-
- digit SIC product codes
 - The greatest level available--CIR level. Product level.
 - I don't use this much, but others in the agency do!
 - 7-digit
-

(25) 11. Were you aware that the SIC system is being replaced by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)?

30.0%;	48	I was unaware of this
26.2%;	42	I am partially aware, but lack details
43.8%;	70	I am aware and understand some implications

Replies 160; Forms 166

12. Would you like to receive more information about NAICS?

(26) Yes, please send me - (Mark all that apply)

92.1%;	93	A brochure that explains NAICS	24.8%;	25	Conference announcements
59.4%;	60	NAICS implementation plans	2.0%;	2	Other

Replies 101; Forms 166

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- Send info on NAICS comparability with existing SIC data.

(27) No Thanks -

67.7%;	42	I will check the Census Bureau's web site (www.census.gov/naics)
32.3%;	20	I don't need more information about NAICS

Replies 62; Forms 166

V. USER PROFILE

Please tell us about yourself so we may serve you better.

(28) 13. Type of organization.

48.8%;	80	Business	4.3%;	7	Association
17.7%;	29	Government	2.4%;	4	Individual
14.6%;	24	Academic/Research	1.2%;	2	Library
6.1%;	10	Media	4.9%;	8	Other

Replies 164; Forms 166

- Consulting
- non-profit economic development org.
- Economic Development District State Data Center depository.
- Economic Development
- Building Material Manufacturer
- Library (University
- Corp. Library
- Council of Governments

(29) 14. Do you work in your organization's library?

29.2%;	47	Yes	70.8%;	114	No
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Replies 161; Forms 166

(30) 15. What is your affiliation with the Census Bureau?

73.6%;	117	None	1.9%;	3	Census Information Center
10.7%;	17	State Data Center	10.1%;	16	Other
3.8%;	6	Business/Industry Data Center			

Replies 159; Forms 166

- SDC Affiliate
- Richmond Public Library, BST Dept. 101 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219
- State Data Center Affiliate
- Cooperator in disseminating permits authorized data
- Depository
- BDC affiliate
- Affiliate Data Center
- Economic Development District State Data Center depository
- Economist
- GPO Depository
- Trade Association
- Client
- Building Permit Depository
- Consumer of housing data

- Federal Depository Library
- Local affiliate of State Data Center

(35) 20. May we contact you to follow up on this questionnaire?

78.7%; 122 Yes

21.3%; 33 No

Replies 155; Forms 166

(36) Question 21. Remarks:

- The computerized data is fine when know exactly which dat you want. It is not so good when you want to know what is available and related information; in this case the printed publication e.g. censu of Manufactures, is far superior.
- A published paper version should always be made available for purchase to the public. Information being available on the internet is nice, yet it is a completely different animal than having a hard copy version of the information. An example: I can receive my new off the internet, but I still prefer to get my newspaper in the morning for reading at my leisure away from a computer.
- Joe Cantalupo is no longer in service to the County of Rockland.
- Census bureau data is always helpful--the data you provide enhances our publication and enables readers to make informal business decisions.
- Thanks for asking!
- The data we are interested in is housing stats, retail sales, etc. For the Jackson, Tenn., area. We compare those with previous months & years and with national averages.
- You have set up an excellent web site that is easy to use, fast and usually supplies me with the information I'm seeking.
- Whenever I have used statistics & required assitance I have found the staff both friendly & efficient. I remain very impressed with your web site & service provided.
- I prefer e-mail contacts rather than phone, as I am frequently not available at my phone for extended periods.
- We serve a varied clientale (academic, business, government, and private citizens) and work across many subject. Census data are absolutely vital to us. Our biggest need is for more geographic area detail more frequently (state, county, place, if possible). Users often do not understand the 5 yr. gaps and lag time for the major Economic Surveys that offer such detail, much less the 10 yr. decennial cycle. The internet is a great help in speeding "publication", but we find access is not yet universal. We still download and print entire documents for guide reference and historical purposes. I am concerned about just how long the electronic medi will remain accurate and usable as technology changes. How will the Bureau deal with these problems?
- I prefer retrieving info from your web site. I particularly like documents in pdf format because they look nice & are easy to use. Output can be ported directly to reports already in progress.
- Census has done a terrific job by putting so much material on the Wed. kepp up the good work.
- I am disappointed that the Census Bureau has cut back on selected metropolitan data services, namely retail sales estimates and commercial building permit activity. While I understood Budget pressures, it seems that lower cost alternative could have been implimented rather that elimination (perhaps annual figures rather that monthly). It is important that the Federal govt. provides timely information that can capture the dynamics of regional growth as well as natural growth on proud level of data services.
- Sorry for the delay--the survey didn't arrive until 8/12/98.
- I received the survey on August 7th--so was not able to return it in the time requested!

Our office is very interested in any information on the implementation of NAICS--as our researchers will be using it a great deal.

- I think that this user survey is an excellent idea; you should poll users periodically.

I would be happy to participate in a users' panel or advisory group.

- Desperately need this information from NAICs. Emerging technology/company information requested everyday.

- We look forward to working with you on the upcoming Census.
- Be sure that all information is made available in the most "user-friendly" manner possible!!
- I use data available by MSA, county and sub-county data not available at these levels is generally not applicable to the work we do. In a (very) few cases (like state and local gov't finances) we use state level data.
- Tutorials and/or manuals should be sent out with Census products. I have fiddled enough with Landview III to utilize some of its versatility. Other colleagues won't due to lack of time to waste on self-teaching (fumbling).

Landview III should allow searches down to the Block level & just empty the fields which raise concerns regarding privacy at that level.

- The web site is generally very helpful a lot of information-sometimes difficult to locate information wanted.
- I find the Census Website to be fairly difficult to use. It's hard to find information that I need. For example: I was trying to find tables on the number of Households & spent probably 45 minutes locating it.
- I work as a local government long range planner. My duties include socio-economic analysis as requested by the public, politicians and officials. The Census Bureau's Web Site is one of my key resources.
- We love the Census Bureau! Clear publications indices and ease of search engines on the Internet site are very important to us. Also, choice of how to download data is good, not all users need or can use spreadsheet software.
- Will all Census data be available only via the Internet? My customers prefer printed format. Thank you.
- More documentation and instructions for obtaining data from gohper directories would be helpful.
- Keep up the good work.
- Security made your site impossible to enter from our system. My trial membership was a waste of money.
- Please provide me with the description of the monthly and annual products listed on the front page.
- Good to see this survey! Dealing with you via the Internet and mail is going well. However, trying to reach people over the phone is still a major headache.
- Glad more of your publications are being made available on the Internet! Suggestion for format of employment data-group by years first, then industry. Is there some alternative for obtaining non-residential building permits.

Figure 1: